The Reconstructionist

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the Reconstructionist

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The Reconstructionist

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EDITORIALS

A REVEALING SILENCE

A READER of Bartley Crum's book "Behind the Silken Curtain" is sure to come away from the volume with an intense loathing of the devious methods employed by the British Foreign and Colonial Office in its handling of the Anglo-American Palestine Commission. To one who has watched the tortuous path of Britain's Palestine policy, Mr. Crum's revelations on this score should come as no surprise. Not so his exposure of the double-dealing activities of our own State Department. With names, dates and details, Bartley Crum chronicles the amazing fact that for years the State Department has secretly sabotaged every pro-Zionist declaration of the White House. "According to this file (the State Department's secret file on Palestine), since September 15, 1938, each time a promise was made to American Jewry regarding Palestine, the State Department promptly sent messages to the Arab rulers discounting it and reassuring them, in effect, that regardless of what was promised publicly to the Jews, nothing would be done to change the situation in Palestine. . . . It (the secret file) revealed that steadily and successively we had made public promises to the Zionists and private promises to the Arabs."

What has the State Department to say to this serious charge? Aside from a blanket denial and a refusal to publish its secret file which, of course, would give away the whole nefarious story, the State Department is silent. That silence speaks volumes. It is the silence the Talmud characterizes as tantamount to admission.

Should we perhaps, now that the whole Palestine question has been thrown into the arena of the UN, write the whole matter off as just one more sorry confirmation of the traditional reputation for duplicity that attaches to diplomats? In our opinion, the shifting of the scene to the UN renders Mr. Crum's exposé of the State Department a matter of the gravest immediate concern. The American representatives to the UN draw their advisers from the State Department and look to that body generally for guidance. If the career men of the State Department are to be permitted to carry on their own policies, independent of and, indeed, contrary to Presidential and Congressional policy, then Jews have lost their chief advocate in the UN—the U.S.A. It seems strange indeed that at this late date one should have to raise the question whether American foreign policy is to be formed by the President and Congress or by small groups of career men in the State Department.

Mr. Crum suggests that President Truman was not even aware of the existence of the State Department's secret file on Palestine. Now that every reader of "Be-

hind the Silken Curtain" knows it, the President of the United States must also be aware of it. There is, of course, the possibility that our Government, even on its top levels, wilfully follows a policy of not letting its right hand know what its left hand is doing. If such should be the case, then the American public is entitled to know it. In America, matters of foreign policy are still subject to the democratic process. Witness the debate, official and unofficial, on the Greco-Turkish loans. The debate on American policy regarding Palestine has long since been concluded. The position of our Government has been officially stated and reaffirmed time and again. The sabotaging of American policy by a small group of appointed officials, even if they be officials of the State Department, constitutes nothing less than subversion of the democratic process.

We Jews therefore owe it not only to ourselves as Jews, but to all other Americans as well, to raise a public clamor against the duplicity of the State Department. We must not allow the administration to evade its responsibility for what has happened by keeping silent until Mr. Crum's exposé has been forgotten. We must demand an answer from the Secretary of State and the President which not only explains the situation but gives definite and clear assurance that nothing like it can happen from now on. We have a right to know whether the arrogant public servants who have abused the confidence of the people have been removed from office, and whether the Arab states have been given clearly to understand that the promises made to them by these career men were unauthorized and of no validity. Above all, we want to know definitely whether the State Department now intends to implement the official American policy by exerting its full influence in favor of renewed Jewish immigration into Palestine, the abolition of the discriminatory restrictions over land sales, and, in general, the facilitation of the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish Commonwealth. Our President and State Department should be flooded with letters, from Jews and from non-Jews who believe in the democratic control of American foreign policy, demanding an answer to these questions.

THE PROBLEM OF UNIVERSAL MILITARY TRAINING

WHEN President Truman appointed his President's Advisory Commission on Universal Training, he called upon a group of lay citizens to pass judgment on a matter which touches upon both national defense and national welfare. That Commission, headed by Professor Carl T. Compton, and including Joseph E. Davies, Samuel Rosenman, Anna Rosenberg, Dr. Daniel Poling and others, has been inviting and receiving opinions from a large variety of organizations and individuals concerned with this problem. It is interesting that, at no time, has the matter been regarded as strictly a military one. The heads of the armed forces are, no doubt, in favor of universal training, but that has not been sufficient for our President. He wants to know how social, religious and cultural groups in the United States feel about it. Since no very great knowledge of military strategy is required, we venture our opinion as well.

Our first, and most natural reaction, is, of course, against the plan. As Jews, who hate war and realize that they are its first and last victims, we shun any program that smacks of war. As Americans too, we are repelled by a program for youth which is reminiscent of European civilization, where military training has been a familiar feature of life since the days of Napoleon. From the military an-

gle, we wonder whether a year's training at an early age will equip a young man for effective service in any conflict which is bound to make use of atomic weapons. We have, last of all, heard so much about brass hats and vested interests, that we have our understandable doubts as to whether the whole business has not been cooked up in order to cut down on the unemployment figures in the officer class.

But our times are too fraught with danger to permit us to prejudice the problem by emotional reactions whether they incline us to cynicism or to complacency. The war, which began in 1914, was interrupted between 1918 and 1939. Are we now in the midst of another interruption, or are we really on the path to permanent peace? That question is not an easy one to answer. In fact, judging by the way diplomatic affairs are conducted these days, the answer will depend, among other factors, on the extent to which our diplomats are prepared to back up their demands by a demonstration of strength. Armies and navies constitute a bargaining power. In the 30's we found out by bitter experience the dangers of unpreparedness on the part of the democracies while aggressive militarist powers were rearming. Though universal training may not provide us with all we shall need in the way of thorough preparedness, it nevertheless is significant as an evidence of our determination to maintain ourselves at top strength, especially during these troubled days.

The argument that preparedness leads to war, not to peace, is only an echo of the old liberal slogans we used to hear, in the days when some of us were, sadly enough, doctrinaire pacifists. On the fourth anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and in the very days when resistance in Eretz Yisrael rises to a climax, it is unseemly for anyone to indulge in the naive catch phrases which left the arming to the fascists, and the theorizing to the idealists. When the United Nations sets up a real international police, it will be time to disarm—not before.

Though we do not ignore the cogency of the arguments for universal military training in view of the present situation, we deem it necessary to stress the definite danger inherent in it and the need for safeguards designed to minimize that danger. There is no doubt that taking young men away from home and from school during their teens may have a detrimental influence on their morals and their morale. An out and out military program for them will not teach them democracy. The men who served in the armed forces during the recent fighting can tell you that army life is inherently antagonistic to that individual liberty which is an essential aspect of democracy. It is therefore imperative that the "training" be more than physical or military. It must include a true orientation to the problems of democracy in our country and in the world; it must enable the youth to understand what is involved in international responsibility. The orientation courses during the war were not conspicuous successes. Our soldiers were given no adequate idea of the meaning of Nazism and Fascism and the utter incompatibility of these ideologies with fundamental American ideals. They were not taught to recognize the germs of Fascism and Nazism in the racial prejudice and religious bigotries that raise their heads from time to time even in America. In fact, many of our soldiers have returned seriously infected by the virus of enemy ideologies. This time the education must be directed not merely to making good soldiers, but to making good citizens.

To insure this direction, civilians must share in the program, as they are sharing now in the discussions *about* the program. If some of our most competent civilian

educators who are sensitive to the dangers, but equally aware of the possibilities, of universal training for military service are given the chance to work with the military, the youth of America will emerge from their training better Americans and better democrats, as well as finer physical specimens.

A LIVE MUSEUM

THE Jewish Theological Seminary has announced that its Jewish Museum will be formally opened to the public on May 6th. The Museum, in its new home at 92nd Street and Fifth Avenue in New York City, will be under the direction of its curator, Dr. Stephen Kayser and his assistant, Dr. Guido Schoenberger.

A museum is generally considered to be a place to which one brings one's children once or twice in a lifetime to see the relics of the past, or else it is regarded as of interest only to specialists who delve into ancient archives and examine archeological and historical remains. If we are to judge from the plans for the Jewish Museum announced by Dr. Kayser, "something new has been added" to the function of museums. According to Dr. Kayser, the Museum will not only bring the Jewish past to life. It will give "a comprehensive picture of Jewish artistic activity in the present. In painting and sculpture, in music and dance, and in study courses in all these fields, the American community will be given insight into the tradition, history, legend and aspiration of the Jewish people." Thus the Jewish Museum promises to be a live center of Jewish culture and art, changing with the needs and interests of the moment, while preserving whatever is most precious in the Jewish culture of the past.

The opening of this new museum affords interesting evidence that Judaism is more than a religion. The need for esthetic expression, along secular as well as religious lines, has been recognized by the Jewish Theological Seminary and has motivated Dr. Kayser in his plans for the Museum's program. It is to be hoped that the Jewish Museum will stimulate the type of artistic creativity which will produce the sacred esthetic heritage of the Jewish civilization of the future.

REALITIES AND VALUES

IT REQUIRES REAL COURAGE FOR a clergyman to admit that the Scriptures sacred to his religion stand in need of correction. Such courage was recently displayed by the Rev. J. Earle Edwards, pastor of the Queens Baptist Church of Queens Village, N. Y. As reported in the New York *Times* of April 7, he said that he would henceforth substitute the word "people" for the word "Jews" wherever the latter word is used in a disparaging way in the New Testament.

"The objective of the Bible is to create love and brotherliness," Mr. Edwards said. "As things stand in today's world, references to racial groups 2,000 years ago are too easily brought into modern situations with sinister meanings doing exactly the opposite of that which was sought originally.

"When we read that the Disciples locked themselves in a room 'for fear of the Jews' the story does not mention the fact that these very Disciples were Jews, as was their Master."

▼

ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANniversary of the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *The American Jewish Outlook* of Pittsburgh ran an editorial consisting almost entirely of quotations from his addresses. We wish it were read by every American.

We find particularly cogent in the light

of the cynicism and distrust that menace the establishment of wholesome international relations and lasting peace, the following passage from a prayer uttered by Roosevelt:

"God of the free . . . Grant us brotherhood in hope and union, not only for the space of this bitter war, but for the days to come which shall and must unite all the children of the earth.

"Our earth is but a small star in the great universe. Yet of it we can make, if we choose, a planet unvexed by war, untroubled by hunger or fear, undivided by senseless distinctions of race, color or theory. . . .

"The spirit of man has awakened and the soul of man has gone forth. Grant us the wisdom and the vision to comprehend the greatness of man's spirit, that suffers and endures so hugely for a goal beyond his own brief span. Grant us honor for our dead who died in the faith, honor for our living who work and strive for the faith, redemption and security for all captive lands and peoples. Give us patience with the deluded and pity for the betrayed. And grant us the skill and valor that shall cleanse the world of oppression and the old base doctrine that the strong must eat the weak because they are strong."

▼

A PERUSAL OF THE NEWS about Palestine in the daily press is likely to give the impression that, if not all of Palestine Jewry, at least all of its vigorous youth approve of the terrorist acts of the Irgun and the Sternists. We should like to see wide publicity given to the following item reported in a JTA dispatch of April 9 from Jerusalem.

Fourteen Palestinian Jewish youth organizations with a total membership of 80,000 issued a joint appeal calling for an end to terrorism. "Only by the united efforts of the whole people under national discipline, can our task be achieved," says their statement. "Our national strength," it continues, "lies in internal discipline; the essence of our work is immigration and settlement, defense, construction and the creation of a Jewish way of life."

Americans who contribute to the Irgun, however unimpeachable their motives, are not helping Zionism but impeding it.

▼

AN INTERESTING ITEM OF NEWS from Damascus tells of the appointment of a committee for the interpretation of Syrian labor legislation.

You may imagine that the labor legislation referred to is a Syrian analogue of the Wagner Act making provision for collective bargaining or that it guarantees minimum wages or limits hours of work. But no, the request for the appointment of the committee was made by the Governor of the Ladkich District to find a way to prohibit by law the practice of wealthy families in his district who purchase young girls from their families or hire them for work for their lifetime.

Such is the Arab state of Syria. Yet it has been granted independence and a seat in the United Nations. But the Jews who have brought to the Near East health, education, all kinds of social services and a decent standard of living are not adjudged worthy of statehood in their national home and have no voice in the council of the nations.

▼

Trend of Events FOR APRIL 11 gives an interesting description of Jewish life on Cyprus.

The Jewish refugees deported to Cyprus from the shores of Eretz Yisrael now number about 11,000.

The refugees are herded in two concentration camps each surrounded by a double barbed wire fence with guard tow-

(*Continued on Page* 19)

Democratization and Other Problems in Jewish Communal Organization

By SAMUEL DININ

In this first installment of Dr. Dinin's article, he discusses the organizational setup of the Los Angeles Jewish community and compares it with that of other Jewish communities from the point of view of democratic functioning. He also discusses the problem of the relationship between the Community Council and the Welfare Funds. In our next issue he will conclude his study with a discussion of the relationship between the Community Council and the Federation and the relation of the Community Council to the various national agencies.

His article is based primarily on the experiences of the Los Angeles Jewish commuity. We invite comment also from members of other communities about the problems discussed. —*Editors*

THIS is an article about democracy in Jewish community organization and related problems. But it is also an article on Los Angeles. Los Angeles is an interesting community not only because Jews all over the country seem to be hell-bent* on getting there (despite the housing shortage), but for many other reasons as well. It now has a Jewish community of about 200,000, which is growing in size with every passing month. Its Jewish Community Council, now celebrating its Bar Mitzvah year, is one of the best and most representative in the country. The problems faced by the Jewish community and the Jewish Community Council confront or will soon confront other growing Jewish communities. The purpose of this article is not to write a history of the Los Angeles Jewish community nor to compile a register of its institutions and its achievements, but to treat of those aspects of its life and organization which have national significance. For the most part this article will raise problems rather than provide answers, in the hope that the readers of *The Reconstructionist* will be able to offer guidance and counsel to this young and growing Jewish community.

* The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce suggests "heaven-bent" as more appropriate.

Democracy and the Jewish Community Council of Los Angeles

The Jewish Community Council of Los Angeles was organized in 1934—in January of 1947 it was thirteen years old. It has at present 266 member organizations which include the vast majority of the active organizations representing every segment of Jewish community life. The representatives of these organizations, numbering about 750, meet three times a year. In January of each year these representatives elect a Board of Directors with a membership of 61. This Board, which meets monthly, carries on the actual work of the Council, mostly with the help of standing and special committees.

Because the community has grown in size and complexity, the Jewish Community Council has itself begun to raise the question as to how it can become more democratic and more truly representative of the entire Jewish community. At present the organizations, institutions or agencies comprising the Jewish Community Council send from one to three representatives to the Council, depending upon the size of their membership. These include institutional members representing organizations and representative members selected through organizations but not considered actual representatives of those organizations. In addition, however, there

are "members-at-large" who can be nominated by three or more representatives of the Council, and who may be admitted by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. The ratio of "members-at-large" to representative members cannot exceed 1 to 15.

Is the Present Setup Democratic?

Whether this form of representation is truly democratic is the question which the Board of Directors posed for the Community Council at its fall meeting in October. Those upholding the negative argued as follows: Because of the great and constant influx of new residents, the number of unaffiliated Jews is larger in Los Angeles than elsewhere. These unaffiliated Jews thus have no representation in the Council affairs. The vast majority of Los Angeles Jews are affiliated with more than one organization; in fact there are many Jews who are affiliated with from five to ten Jewish organizations or more. These multiple-affiliationists thus have a voice in the selection of representatives to the Council in many organizations. Since no more than three representative members can be sent to the Council from any one organization, the vast majority of the membership of any organization, among whom may be people of ability, occasionally of greater ability than those elected, cannot aspire to leadership in the Board of the Council, the Board being elected by the representative members.

The suburbs of Los Angeles constitute a further problem. There is a Los Angeles county as well as the city of Los Angeles. The County has many organized suburban communities such as the Bay Cities, Pasadena, Centinella Valley, San Fernando Valley, Burbank, Verdugo Hills and others. On what basis shall these communities be represented in the Council—as organized communities or on the basis of organizations?

The Oakland Plan

Whether or not the arguments cited above have merit, the problem is real. The Council therefore has been examining the experience of other communities. One such community is Oakland. Oakland, too, is in California, across the Bay from San Francisco. In the Oakland Council there are no institutional members, only individual membership. Every person 18 years of age or over who contributes $5.00 or more to the local Jewish Welfare Fund automatically becomes a member of the Council. The Board of the Council is elected by a direct vote of the members who now number several thousand.

The Newark Plan

Another community whose organizational pattern is being studied is Newark In Newark, N. J., every adult contributor of three dollars or more to the United Jewish Appeal of Essex County becomes a member of the Council. No financial contributions are required from organizations, congregations, suburban and youth councils or social service agencies as a condition of affiliation. The General Assembly consists of delegates selected by organizations, congregations, suburban community Councils, youth councils, and social service agencies, and an *equal number* of delegates elected by the individual members of the Council. One half of the delegates at large are elected from Newark and one-half from the other municipalities in Essex County and adjoining areas. The General Assembly elects the Board of Trustees.

The General Pattern

There are today about 80 Jewish Community Councils in the country. In a sample study of 35 Community Councils

made by the Council of Federations and Welfare Funds, it was found that about one-third of the community councils provide for individual memberships. Such membership is extended to contributors in fund-raising campaigns, members of affiliated organizations or residents of the community generally. However, in half of these, such affiliation is either of honorary or of non-voting character, involving little or no participation in Council activities. In the other six councils individual members have the privilege of electing representatives-at-large to the governing body of the council. Many of the councils not having individual memberships endeavor to broaden the base of representation by providing for the election of a varying number of representatives-at-large to their governing bodies. Such representatives are elected by the organizational delegates.

It is interesting to note that the plan of individual memberships is characteristic of communities with a Jewish population under 15,000. The plan of providing for representatives-at-large in addition to organizational representatives is typical only of communities with a Jewish population under 25,000. Newark and Los Angeles are thus exceptional among the larger Jewish communities.

"Pure" democracy—the direct election of governing bodies by the members of the Jewish community meeting in assembly is characteristic of small Jewish communities. By and large it will continue to remain so. It is doubtful whether it will be possible, let alone desirable, to have direct election of governing boards in the larger Jewish communities. "Pure" democracy in our American cities often leads to control of elections by politicians and political machines. Decisions are reached not by individual give and take, but through organized political parties. "Pure" democracy would lead in the large communities to crystallization of Jewish "political" parties, sharply divided ideologically.

Or it might lead to the election of popular individuals or individuals active in many organizations and thus cause the elimination of some who have much to contribute to the life of the community but who are not active "joiners" and do not attend many meetings of many organizations. The probabilities are that it would lead to the elimination of some of the big contributors from positions of leadership and thus might affect the campaigns of the Welfare Fund.

Indeed it is the desire to bring some of the large contributors into the Board of the Council which in part motivates the search for a wider base of representation in the Los Angeles Council. It is for the same reason that the "rank and file" members of the Los Angeles Jewish Community Council did not react favorably to the suggestion that some new plan of representation be adopted. At the fall meeting the delegates stressed the impracticality of the Oakland plan for a community the size of Los Angeles. They saw the advantages of the Newark plan but revealed a desire to proceed cautiously with any change in the present structure. There was a definite feeling that the organizational form of representation gave the affiliated "rank and file" Jew the best "break" in representation. There was expressed a willingness to liberalize the proportion of members-at-large to organizational representatives, now set at 1 to 15, but not to extend it at present to the fifty-fifty rate provided for in the Newark plan. These discussions will be continued. No definite decision has been reached on what to do, but the above seems to be the sentiment of the majority of the Council members.

As is already apparent, no single pattern of organization has been worked out

or can be worked out for all Jewish communities. Size, local history and traditions will affect the structure and democratization of organized Jewish community life. Los Angeles is already exceptional among the larger Jewish communities for the unusually democratic character of its Jewish Community Council. It is a hopeful sign that the Council is nevertheless still seeking to become more and more democratic. It will continue to watch and study the experiences of other communities and to benefit by them.

The Relation of the Community Council to the Welfare Funds

The relation of the Welfare Fund and Federation to the Community Council varies with the size of the community. In communities with less than 5,000 Jewish population, the Community Council and Welfare Fund are one. These small communities usually have no separate federations, and the council usually serves as the social agency as well.

In communities with from 5,000 to 10,000 Jewish population the Community Council generally embodies the functions of a Welfare Fund. On the whole the trend in these communities is toward unification of total communal activity within a single body.

In communities of 10,000-25,000 Jewish population, half of the Councils carry on the functions of a Welfare Fund. In practically all of the remaining Councils, the separate Welfare Fund agencies and Community Councils are linked by having the same executive director. In some of the Councils there is a tendency to merge the activities of the Council, the Federation, and the Welfare Fund.

In the communities of over 25,000 Jewish population, Council, Federation, and Welfare Fund generally operate as distinct bodies. The Councils in these communities have yet to achieve the authority of a central representative medium encompassing the whole field of Jewish communal affairs.

Los Angeles is unique among the large Jewish communities in the extent to which it has achieved communal centralization. In a subsequent installment of this article the relation of Federation to Community Council will be touched upon. Here I should like to discuss the question of Council and Welfare Fund.

The United Jewish Welfare Fund of Los Angeles

In Los Angeles the United Jewish Welfare Fund is conducted by the Jewish Community Council. During the past year, the Welfare Fund collected over $5,200,000 as compared with $2,707,086 in 1945, $613,677 in 1942, and $301,436 in 1940. This represents a considerable achievement compared to what has been done in the Jewish communities of comparable size.

The basic aim of the United Welfare Fund is to raise more money for intelligent distribution by *concentrating* the giving, the energy and the interest of the Jews of Los Angeles instead of *dissipating* the giving, energy and interest into too many channels.

The United Jewish Welfare Fund of Los Angeles has succeeded to a remarkable degree in capturing the attention of the community and in eliciting both enthusiasm and proper response. During the spring months, when the campaign is in progress, no other drives for funds are conducted and the attention of the entire community is riveted upon the United Jewish Welfare Fund Drive. Since the Welfare Fund is under the jurisdiction of the Jewish Community Council and since the Council represents practically all of the organized Jewish community, it is possible to ask Jewish organizations to devote all

their energies during the campaign months to the Welfare Fund.

The Welfare Fund can exercise little control over those agencies which are not or do not want to be beneficiaries of its campaign. It does, however, succeed in getting these organizations to limit their campaigns to those months of the year during which the Welfare Fund itself has no drive. But even in the case of beneficiaries of the Welfare Fund there are loopholes which enable them to extend and expand their fund-raising activities. There are special drives for funds such as the building drives of the Jewish Centers Association and the local Jewish hospitals and the special drive for a medical school for the Hebrew University being conducted by Hadassah and the American Friends of the Hebrew University. In addition the Council permits all organizations to carry on drives for membership, which also involve money-raising in the form of dues, and on occasion, private solicitations of funds through parlor meetings, etc., which are not organized public appeals. In this way many organizations manage to carry on campaigns supplementary to the large Welfare Fund campaign. One of the largest beneficiaries of the Welfare Fund campaigns, for example, is the United Palestine Appeal (as a partner in the United Jewish Appeal). Large contributors give to the Welfare Fund in the knowledge that Palestine is a beneficiary of the campaign. But in addition, appeals are made through the year for Jewish National Fund, Histadrut, Youth Aliyah, projects of the American Friends of the Hebrew University, besides appeals for Haganah, Irgun and other Palestinian causes.

Other Fund Raising Efforts of the Community

The Welfare Fund Drive is the major but not the sole fund-raising campaign of the year. The Community Council itself concedes not only the possibility but the desirability of some supplementary efforts by organizations through limited membership activities. These "supplementary efforts," however, have tended to increase in number and scope, and to take on the character of real campaigns. The result is that the Jewish community is being subjected to special drives of one kind or another almost every week and month of the year. Although Los Angeles as a whole is still a disorganized and heterogeneous community (because of the large and constant influx of new arrivals) there is a small homogeneous group, particularly among the Jewish leadership in the community, which follows the practice of contributing each to the other's pet fund. The consequence is that the energies of the best Jewish leaders in the community are consumed in the grinding task of money-raising with little or no energy left for constructive cultural and educational work.

Why all the separate campaigns for funds? There are several reasons. Some of the national and overseas organizations demand and require of the Welfare Fund much more than they can actually obtain. These organizations feel that they can obtain much more through independent campaigns than through the Welfare Fund. And indeed—at present—they do. The reasons for it are obvious. Five million dollars, though a significant sum, does not begin to represent what Los Angeles Jewry can or should contribute to Jewish causes in the light of its total wealth. The past few years have been years of prosperity, and with the fifteen percent exemption of contributions from income taxes, a great deal of money was available practically for the asking.

Other organizations see in independent campaigns an opportunity to raise more than is really required for their

work in order to provide trust funds for the lean years or to expand the work of the organization in new directions. Some campaigns are occasionally inspired by leaders anxious for honors, prestige, or publicity. In addition it must not be forgotten that each organization has its own membership and clientele who, naturally, put far more heart into the campaign for funds of their own organization than into that of the Welfare Fund. It must not be forgotten, too, that all campaigns for funds are rationalized as educational campaigns as well, and are important to the organizations involved as instrumentalities of propaganda and education.

Too often, however, organizations get involved in a continuous round of campaigns for this or that fund to the neglect of youth work, political activity, and membership work. This is often true of Zionists (whatever their ideology) as well as of other Jewish organizations in the city.

In one campaign Hadassah Youth Aliyah was "oversold" as *the* agency responsible for saving Jewish children, when, as is known, it plays only a supporting role in connection with one of the five important steps involved in saving a child, the other four steps being supported by the Welfare Fund through Joint Distribution Committee and the United Palestine Appeal. The Gewerkschaften Campaign is often "sold" in the heat of the campaigns as though it were the chief support of the work of the labor group in Palestine without duly stressing the fact that the Gewerkschaften Campaign is merely a source of supplementary support and that Palestine must still depend upon the success or failure of the United Palestine Appeal for whatever outside funds it needs. I cite these examples just because these causes are dear to me. The same is true of other campaigns as well.

Some peculiar developments take place as a result of these many drives. There are individuals who formerly gave as much or more to the Jewish National Fund (for example) as to the Welfare Fund, which embraces overseas, national and local organizations, and who still give disproportionate amounts despite their increased giving to the Welfare Fund. There are those who do not contribute as large a sum to the Welfare Fund as they should or should like to, knowing they will be called upon for contributions by many other causes. Then, of course, there is a vast number of small givers who contribute only to their particular organization and to no other.

There will always be the problem of making Jews community-minded and of getting them to work as enthusiastically for the Welfare Fund as they do for their own pet projects. The Council last year got contributions from 43,000 individuals, a remarkable number in view of the Jewish population of Los Angeles. With each passing year it is attracting more contributors and getting greater participation in the Welfare Fund campaigns. A multiplication of supplementary campaigns for funds will lead to fragmentation of the community effort and may weaken the unity and centralized effort so painfully achieved. The Community Council has been grappling with this problem and has been trying to restrict this tendency to independent campaigning, but of course, it is meeting resistance from those groups which are for the present benefiting most by independent campaigns.

Possibly a new solution is needed on a different level to resolve this conflict. The experience of other communities and suggestions as to what can be done to improve the situation will be welcomed.

(To be concluded)

We Still Think We Are Right: A Reply to a Christian Critic of Reconstructionism

By MORDECAI M. KAPLAN

IT is good to see oneself at times through the eyes of another, particularly of a critic who is understanding, candid and well-disposed. Reconstructionism, therefore, owes a debt to Dr. Franklin H. Littell for his interesting article, "The Future of Christianity and Judaism: A Christian Views Reconstructionism," which appeared in the April 4th and April 18th issues of this magazine. His criticism is challenging and his candor invites an equally candid statement of the differences in viewpoint which prevent us from accepting some of his conclusions. It is good for us to know wherein our movement commends itself to the judgement of such liberal Christians as Dr. Littell, and wherein it seems to fall short. We need not necessarily acquiesce in their judgment of us, but even where they seem to misjudge us, we should be grateful to them when they reveal to us wherein we have not stated our case convincingly. They thus afford us the opportunity to clarify our position in response.

Dr. Littell praises Reconstructionism for its emphasis on the principle of voluntarism in religion. He sees in it an analogy to evangelical Protestantism's revolt against the authoritarianism of the established churches and to its insistence on the free assent of the individual conscience as the basis of loyalty to the religious community.

Dr. Littell, however, is critical of Reconstructionism on three counts: (1) He criticizes our acceptance of the American political setup as conditioning the pattern of American Judaism. This seems to him an undue surrender to the authority of the state. (2) He criticizes our conception of Jewish religion as the self-consciousness of the Jewish people in its effort to orientate itself spiritually to the cosmos. This seems to him to make of Jewish religion merely the apotheosis of Jewish nationhood, a dangerous trend in an age when national chauvinism menaces the peace of the world. (3) He chides Reconstructionism for abandoning the traditional Jewish doctrine of Israel's divine election and mission to mankind. The abandonment of that doctrine seems to him to represent a sort of religious isolationism and self-sufficiency. It does not comport with the Prophetic ideal of Israel as the instrument for achieving God's Kingdom on earth.

Our Basic Premises

The inability of Dr. Littell to accept as valid some of the principal tenets of the Reconstructionist doctrine arise from a difference in fundamental premises concerning the nature of religions and their relation to the other aspects of the collective life of their respective communities. Until that difference is stated and clearly envisaged, it is difficult to respond to his specific criticisms.

Dr. Littell apparently operates with the revelational conception of religion. Just what he understands by revelation is not quite clear, but it apparently means more to him than merely an intuitive insight into the divine meaning of life. It has reference to a historical event, or series of events of a supernatural character, which points to divine grace. This involves for him as corollary the acceptance

of the Christian version of the specific historic episodes and personalities through which the supernatural manifestation of religion took place.

From that premise the points that he makes in criticism of Reconstructionism flow naturally enough. But there are also other consequences from that premise of which he does not seem aware. One inevitable consequence is that the religions which claim possession of the supernaturally revealed key to human salvation must necessarily be rivals and mutually antagonistic; they cannot regard other religions as standing on the same spiritual footing with themselves.

The Reconstructionist premise on the other hand assumes that the truths of religion are wholly the product of the intuitive insights of religious personalities in interpreting the significance of the life about them. It does not predicate any supernatural event or series of events but assumes that divine grace is manifest in those powers of the human mind which enable it to discover the laws on which human salvation depends. These laws represent for it the will of God. Thus man's discovery of these laws and God's revelation of them are but the obverse and reverse of the same process.

Since religions are thus spiritual interpretations of experience, and since not even the greatest genius experiences life in a vacuum but always in a social context, the specific character of religions is inevitably determined by the context of the collective experience of the group. Thus a people's religion, like its literature and its art, speaks in an idiom of its own which is best understood by, and has a maximum appeal for, those who share in the collective life of which it is an interpretation.

The fact that each religion speaks in an idiom of its own does not, however, mean that it may not, in that idiom, express a universal truth which can be translated, as it were, into the idioms of other religions. Different religions need *not* therefore regard one another as rivals. The validity of one does not depend on the disparagement of any other. All may equally contribute, though in different ways, to the establishment of God's universal kingdom of righteousness. Their differences are not necessarily differences of principle but differences of personality. Their unlikenesses are just as legitimate as their likenesses. Only such a conception of religion can serve as the basis of that religious pluralism which we must accept as normal if we do not want to bring back the tragic era of interreligious warfare and persecution, which Dr. Littell deplores.

At any rate it is only from the premise of such a conception of religion and its relation to the rest of life that I can discuss the points that Dr. Littell raises in criticism of Reconstructionism.

Why We Accept the Democratic American Setup

Let us see how the first of these points looks when viewed from these premises. Dr. Littell's critique of my statement that the political pattern to which Jewish life in America must conform must be one that is likely to remain permanent in this country shows a misunderstanding on his part of the whole concept of peoplehood with which Reconstructionism operates. True, he too describes the Protestant community in terms of what he calls "covenantal peoplehood," but it is clear that what he means by the term is something quite different from what we mean by it.

To Dr. Littell peoplehood merely denotes mutual cooperation and fraternal relations among the members of a group sharing a common religious ideal and discipline. To the Reconstructionists, Jewish

peoplehood means the entire complex of historical realities which have their roots in the soil of Eretz Yisrael, the land where Israel's effort to sustain its collective life developed that unique civilization which goes by the name of Judaism. Peoplehood, as we use the term, therefore includes not merely a mutuality of responsibility among members who adhere to a specific faith but also includes historical and geographical realities which must be woven into the pattern of their personal and communal life.

In any discussions of the relations of the Jewish people to the non-Jewish population among whom they live, these historic and geographic realities must not be overlooked, for they, and not the attitude of mutuality among members of the Jewish community are responsible for the difficulties that call for adjustment. These realities are the ground of our being regarded as alien by the non-Jewish population.

This state of alienage, which was imposed on the Jewish people throughout the centuries, was removed in Western lands after the libertarian movements of the 18th and 19th centuries as being incompatible with the democratic form of polity. When, therefore, we speak of adapting Jewish life to the pattern "that is likely to remain permanent in this country," it is this democratic form of polity that we have in mind. We must accept that form of polity as ultimate, if we do not want to be regarded as aliens. There is nothing in the full acceptance of the implications of political democracy which runs counter to any of the spiritual values inherent in Jewish tradition at its best. In accepting the democratic American setup as the frame to which Jewish life must adjust itself, we Jews do not forego the right to combat whatever evils may tend to corrupt our American democracy. On the contrary, the very acceptance of the fundamental American institutions imposes on us the obligations to exercise conscientiously the freedoms that those institutions are designed to insure to all American citizens.

What Is Particular, and What Universal, in a Religion?

The second point of Dr. Littell's criticism concerns my definition of a religion as "the soul or self-consciousness of a particular folk." He criticizes that conception as "not only . . . particularistic to a point dangerous to true universalism," but as affording "no proper safeguards to the demonic thrust of racialism."

Again we must refer to the fundamental differences in the premises from which Dr. Littell and we Reconstructionists view the nature of the historic religions. The relationship of the particular to the universal in religion can be clearly grasped not from the view of **revelational religion,** but only from our premise that religions arise from the intuitive insights of great spiritual personalities reflecting on human experience.

The way in which the human mind at its best operates is the same everywhere, but the experiences whose significance it tries to interpret are always particular. The experiences of one people are analogous to those of others in different places and times. Therefore, the generalizations from those experiences have universal significance. Nevertheless, the specific content of the religions derived from them, the occasions that called forth the religious doctrines, the immediate situation to which the religious utterances refer, and the form and language in which they are expressed are always derived from a specific social milieu. No matter how individually creative a religious genius may be, and no matter how broad his interests and sympathies, his thought is born of the matrix of a particular social

organism, is orientated by his participation in the collective life of his people. Moreover, a religion exercises its initial and most effective influence by its implementation through the group to whose life it has given meaning and sanctity.

When the spiritual intuitions of the religious geniuses among a people become part of its social heritage, these geniuses become saints and heroes; the literature they produce or that is written about them becomes its sacred scriptures; the events in the people's history that have become significant through their teachings are celebrated in holidays and festivals; their projections of the goals of the group's collective endeavors are treasured as sacred prophecies; their ideals find utterance in rituals. Thus arise those *sancta,* those sacred objects, persons and events, which constitute the distinguishing character of any religion. Indeed the *sancta* of a people's civilization, in their organic relationship to one another and to the general way of life of the people, constitute what is meant by "a religion."

It is thus the *sancta* that establish the identity of a religion and enable it to continue over many generations, despite changes in our mode of life and thought. Their original significance is felt mainly by the people in whose tradition they continue to figure. That does not militate against their becoming a source of universal values. The Patriarchs, Moses, the Prophets, the Psalmists are all among the *sancta* of Judaism. But Jews have no desire to monopolize them. On the contrary, we Jews are happy when the rest of the world finds in them a source of guidance and inspiration. But when these and other *sancta* of Judaism are claimed by the Church as being truly honored by it and as being profaned by the Jewish people, becaue of their rejection of the Christian philosophy of life—that claim seems to Jews entirely unwarranted. And when Jews are asked, in the name of universalism, to accept the Christian philosophy of life, because the Christians have accepted certain Jewish *sancta,* and to abandon all those Jewish *sancta* in which Christians are not interested—that demand appears to Jews as absurd. The Church's appropriation of Jewish *sancta,* at the same time that it denies the validity of the Jewish people's title to its own use and interpretation of these *sancta* is not universalism; it is plagiarism.

There is a danger in the borrowing of *sancta* by one civilization from another. It tends to arrest the development of the religious interpretation of the experiences, events and personalities in the life of the people that does the borrowing. Borrowed *sancta* tend to assume a magical significance instead of expressing the self-consciousness of the group, its awareness of its own ideals, its beliefs about what constitutes the good and abundant life and its responsibility for achieving that life.

What was wrong with Nazism is not that it sought to invest events and personalities of German history with religious significance, thus creating specifically German *sancta,* but that the Nazis interpreted religion in the narrow national sense which placed the rest of mankind not only outside the circle of salvation, but even outside the circle of the truly human. That they did so may perhaps be attributed to the fact that the universal ideals of Christianity were associated exclusively with *sancta* derived from a foreign source and became equally a victim of Nazi xenophobia.

Dr. Littell dislikes our identification of a religion with the self-consciousness of a group, because he equates self-consciousness with self-adulation. Where such collective self-worship exists it is evil, but it is not a necessary concomitant of self-consciousness. At its best, self-consciousness, whether in the group or the individual

is not self-glorification but the attempt to put the self in its place, to live responsibly in full awareness of one's relation to other selves. That there are evil personalities does not mean that personality is evil, and that there are evil nationalisms does not mean that nationalism is evil. The recognition by a people that it has a collective soul or spirit is no more dangerous than the recognition by the individual that he has a soul, so long as it is recognized that all souls, of people's as of individual's, are created in God's image, and that all of them owe the same allegiance to God, the Soul of the Universe.

Indeed, without this recognition that every religion is the soul of a historic civilization, its effort to direct its life into channels that spell salvation for itself and others, and that the soul of each is equally precious in the sight of God, it seems to us impossible to attain true universalism in religion. When brothers quarrel about the birthright, there can be no true brotherhood, no firm basis for that voluntary cooperation in the interest of humanity which transcends all national, racial and religious divisions.

Why the Chosen People Idea Is an Anachronism

This brings us squarely to the issue raised in the third point of Dr. Littell's criticism of Reconstructionism. Dr. Littell disapproves of our contention that the chosen people idea is an anachronism which is no longer tenable. "The doctrine of divine election/special mission," he says, "is dialectically related to the universalist dream," and adds, "Is the globe to be the stage for the Christian drama, and one nation—Palestine—the focus for a Judaism reduced to folk-religion?"

It is true that the doctrine of divine election/special mission is dialectically related to the universalist dream, but we must inquire how it is related to it before accepting the assumption that it is indispensable to the realization of that dream, or even, in the modern era, advances its realization. That doctrine arose at a time when the belief in supernatural revelation was universal. It was then universally assumed that only by some supernatural manifestation, some theophany or heavenly voice, could God have originally made known to man the truths he needs for his salvation. As long as the authority of religious ideals depended on faith in an allegedly historic event that occurred in a particular place at a particular time, or on a series of such events, it was natural and proper for the people in whose tradition that revelation was recorded to believe itself to be the exclusive and chosen instrument of divine grace. It was then obligatory for it to spread its gospel, to try to convince others that the events it sanctified had actually happened and that they meant what its own tradition declared they meant. Salvation should not be hoarded.

But this doctrine inevitably led to a religious authoritarianism that is inconsistent with perfect voluntarism. One who believes that other religions whose adherents had no share in those events on which his own faith in the truths of his religion rests are denied salvation inevitably is compelled by logic to disparage those other religions. He thus demands the acceptance by other peoples of the *sancta* of his own tradition. He may deprecate the use of violence to impose his religion, but he can hardly avoid the exertion of psychological pressure. When, for example, Christians maintain that only Christianity is the true religion, then every Jew who does not accept the Christian interpretation of the divinity of Jesus is stigmatized as one who has rejected God. Put upon a people the stigma of having rejected God and having consequently been rejected by God, and you in-

evitably make of them an object of detestation. One of the deepest roots of anti-Semitism is thus to be found in the dialectic connection of the chosen-people/religious mission idea with universalism. By bringing such psychological pressure to bear on minorities to adopt the *sancta* of the majority group and discard their own, the adherents of such a missionary religion thus sin against that very voluntarism which is the one aspect of Reconstructionism of which Dr. Littell voices emphatic approval. To do justice to all religions the principle of voluntarism must go much further than the renunciation of physical compulsion or social ostracism exerted against dissenters; it must avoid applying the psychological pressure which flows from the assumption that religions which differ from it are necessarily less qualified to serve as vehicles of divine truth.

From the Reconstructionist premise, that different religions vary essentially not in the degree of truth that they express but in the group *sancta* resulting from the specific group experiences by which they were taught to know God, no religion can claim inherent superiority over others. The universal truths revealed in the spiritual intuition of the great personalities that have influenced any religion are communicable and can be expressed in association with the *sancta* of any other religion. Indeed, they are the more effective for being thus integrated with what are already objects of reverence for the group.

The desire of the Jewish people for a land, where their own civilization can flourish and their own religious ideals can be freely implemented without being subject to the pressure of a dominant non-Jewish culture does not mean that Judaism is isolationist in its outlook. Nor does its effort to walk humbly with its God and not claim superior accessibility to Him mean that it does not want to walk in step with true servants of God's kingdom among all nations, races and religions. On the contrary, it is precisely because we recognize our creatureliness and do not arrogate to our religion an authority superior to that of any other religion, except in its demands on our own loyalty, that we feel obligated to abandon the claim to being God's chosen.

From the point of view of a concept of Jewish religion not as a supernatural revelation to the Jewish people but as the soul of that people, as its collective conscience expressed through its *sancta,* the doctrine of chosenness is no longer dialectically essential to faith in the universal kingdom of righteousness which is the Kingdom of God. Rather is it an impediment to the achievement of that kingdom. The best spiritual insight of modern men sees in every religion an approach to the divine, and that insight we regard as a manifestation of God in modern life.

REALITIES AND VALUES

(*Continued from Page* 7)

ers mounting machine guns and search lights at each corner. They live in crowded Nissen huts and tents.

But has their spirit been crushed by the years of indignities and imprisonment? Not to judge from the following facts.

During the two weeks before Pesah 135 couples were married. New babies are born in the camps at the rate of 30 to 40 a month. The "exile colony" has established its own schools and synagogues. Each camp publishes a newspaper and all have workshops. There are exhibits and a library and several soccer teams which play the British troops quartered on the island.

Can such a people be vanquished? Can they be forever kept from their goal? We doubt it.

Book Notes

PALESTINE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

PALESTINE: PROBLEM AND PROMISE, by Robert R. Nathan. Oscar Gass, Daniel Creamer. Public Affairs Press. Washington, D. C., 661 *pages.*

THIS is one of the most rigorously logical and persuasive treatises on Palestine which has yet appeared. Scientifically trained economists first, and idealists second, the authors present the case for Jewish Palestine with the perfection of a syllogism with every premise neatly, carefully arranged, and therefore utterly irrefutable.

So unassailable is the logic and unanswerable the argument that a reviewer in the New York *Times,* a newspaper anything but favorable towards Zionism, ended his brief summary of this factual survey with the decisive conclusion that "When one considers all this together there can hardly be any doubt where intrinsic justice lies."

Palestine is in the Middle East, around which area a host of grievous misconceptions have been deliberately created and spread. Both the major and minor ones are analyzed at great length and neatly disposed of, leaving no doubt as to their basic fallacy or falsehood. The supreme problem of the Middle East, yet the one which is energetically suppressed, is poverty of man and soil. Unless remedied, there is no hope for this, one of the potentially richest portions of the earth.

Despite popular belief, the Middle East is definitely not entirely Arabic in character, either in language or in nationality. The three largest and leading states, Turkey, Egypt and Iran are none of them racially or culturally Arabic. Though predominantly Moslem in religion, "the unity of this tie can also be easily overstated," and the unscrupulous, dishonest propagandists, paid or unpaid, do so regularly. In the largest and most highly developed country of the Middle East, in Turkey, "Islamic teaching is prohibited in the schools." The bitter and perpetual feuds between the various orthodox and unorthodox sects make any talk of Moslem religious unity a jest. The religion of Islam has no place for Palestine. To Moslems, Palestine is not a Holy Land, as it is to the Jews and Christians. The "religious" significance it has lately assumed is spurious, purely political in character, and instigated by Arab ecclesiastical politicians in the pay of the British.

The much heralded rising Arab nationalism, a bogey sedulously spread and cultivated, is branded a pure myth. The masses in Egypt, as throughout the entire Middle East, are profoundly indifferent to nationalism, to democracy, and to anything else for the crucial reason that 80 per cent of them "live under conditions of slow starvation" and endure "a life little removed from a walking death." Those who have visited Syria or Egypt or Turkey will appreciate the truth of this assertion, its appalling implications, and its inherent challenge to the American and British governments, who are so disturbed about possible Russian influence among the Arab peoples.

After a brief and illuminating resumé of Turkish rule over Palestine, the incredibly tragic story of Palestine under the British is told. Evidence upon evidence

is piled up, of British treachery, sabotage and deceit, till the record becomes conclusive, and overwhelming and a condemnation which no amount of diplomatic double-talk or evasion can erase or soften. The fair-minded person can have no doubts concerning the true intentions of the British in Palestine from the day of the issuance of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate.

For an authoritative interpretation of these documents, the authors take us to Lloyd George, to Arthur J. Balfour, and to Winston Churchill—Prime Minister, author of the Balfour Declaration, and Secretary of War respectively, when the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate were issued. These three men, more than any other single group, were instrumental in bringing Palestine under British control. What they have to say concerning British intent, purpose and aim, and they are quoted at length, leaves no doubt whatever that the British in 1917 promised to establish in Palestine a Jewish State.

The systematic nullification of this pledge is traced with scientific and painstaking objectivity. A careful examination of British policy touching such crucial issues as immigration, land, and the character of Colonial officials sent to Palestine to administer the country compels the melancholy conclusion that "the weight of responsibility for failing to fulfill the moral and legal obligations assumed under the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate must fall on His Majesty's government. The British Government abandoned these obligations entirely when they impeded her competition with Italy and Germany for Arab support in the Mediterranean." Today, when Soviet Russia is the alleged threat to the Empire, the same "competition" prevails, and now as then British policy tends not to increase the welfare of the Arab masses, but to deepen their ignorance, poverty and submission.

The British have pursued a particularly brutal policy in the matter of Jewish immigration. Even the unprecedented Hitler holocaust, which took the lives of at least six million Jews, did not move the British government, with Churchill as Prime Minister, to modify the cruel provisions of the 1939 White Paper. "Through the war years," the authors attest, "the Palestine administration adopted every possible device, including deportation of refugees who had entered without permission, to discourage potential refugees from pouring into Palestine."

The best current pretext for British sabotage and liquidation of promises made to the Jews is the so-called "Arab problem"—as much a British creation, as are the Arab League, and all Arab politicians, secular and religious, from Ibn Saud down. This issue is stated quite realistically, namely that "the authors of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate recognized that they were announcing a policy that would not command the support of Palestinian Arabs. They may well have underestimated the amount of Arab opposition, but they knew that there would be opposition. They deliberately imposed a political sacrifice on the Palestine Arabs. Their justification for imposing this sacrifice was the dire need of the Jewish people. Its compensations were first to include the establishment of other independent Arab states, second, the international guarantee of equal individual rights to Palestinian Arabs, etc." While the Arabs received all of the "compensations" the Jews are being robbed of the only award or promise made them. Particularly timely and valid is the penetrating observation that "The very existence of these Arab States with large, potentially productive but undeveloped lands constitutes perhaps the strongest argument

against the creation of yet another Arab State in the 10,400 square miles of Palestine, while the Jews have no other national home."

Part three of the book is a detailed analysis of contemporary Palestine, with illuminating chapters and statistical data touching such crucial questions as land, people, national income, water, fuel and power, construction, transport, trade and services, labor organization and enterprise, money and finance, international economic relations, public and quasi-public finance. Quite literally, no aspect of economic life is omitted.

"Palestine in the Next Decade," the fourth part, is a forecast of the great promise the future holds in store for the Holy Land, provided the British do not liquidate by force the Jewish National Home. The authors consider in detail the immigration potential, possibilities for water and power development, agricultural development, manufactures, etc.

Even a fair summary of this truly encyclopedic volume would require first a careful study of the contents, not a mere reading, and then an exceedingly lengthy analysis. This brief review it is hoped will indicate the truly unusual character of the book, its rich comprehensiveness and the irrefutable case it makes for Jewish Palestine. It answers every possible question and issue, and does so with documentation, with facts and figures, with statistical data of unimpeachable character.

THEODORE N. LEWIS

Random Thoughts

FREEZE the literalized form of the messianic belief as entertained by rural Jewry in the days of Herod. Compound that with Neo-Platonic *midrash* started by Philo the Jew, and you have the Christianity of the Church Fathers.

Take the Christianity of the Church Fathers, compound it with Rome's ambition to rule the world, and you have Roman Catholicism.

* * *

Semantics is a therapy recently discovered to cure language of the diseases of vagueness, ambiguity, equivocation, simulation, evasion and their like.

These are the diseases that befog the mind, poison the emotion and paralyze the will.

* * *

In a recent summary of a study made by the "Opinion Survey Headquarters at Bremen, Germany, the New York *Times* reported that Germans of Protestant background tended to be more prejudiced than Catholics." But in both groups those who attend church regularly are more prone to anti-Semitism than those lax in attendance.

It is quite evident that the so-called "Judeo-Christian emphasis on brotherhood" is not evenly distributed.

All the weight seems to be resting on the Judean leg.

The Christian leg has a terrible limp, if we are to judge from the foregoing study.

We invite the doctors of the Conference of Christians and Jews to do something about the sick leg.

* * *

Though God is perfect, he is not a perfectionist.

Otherwise how would Abraham have

dared to plead with God not to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, even if only ten righteous men were to be found there?

According to our Sages, Abraham is supposed to have addressed God thus: "Unless Thou foregoest a little, the world cannot survive."

* * *

A conflagration at night reddens the sky. The roosters seeing it begin to crow. They mistake it for the dawn.

Whenever a world-devastating war breaks out, the incurable optimists think that it is the dawn of the millenium.

* * *

John Hay, the famous Secretary of State under McKinley said, "There will always be 34 per cent of the Senate on the blackguard side."

In the case of the Senate's vote on Lilienthal, he was only four per cent out of the way.

* * *

The famous artist Max Band was recently twitted by some of his friends for speaking enthusiastically of the Genizah fragments of the Jewish Theological Seminary Library.

(Those are the fragments of ancient Jewish manuscripts which have yielded up many a valuable literary treasure that had long been lost.)

"What's there so wonderful about a lot of ancient moldy scraps of parchment?" said they.

"That is the mold," he replied, "which yields the penicillin we Jews need to kill the dangerous bacteria of self-contempt."

* * *

What is known as a "triumph of misguided technology," the radio and record engineers succeeded in producing—recordings of music that were "acoustically perfect—i.e., completely dead."

Those recordings lacked the depth and resonance of the concert hall.

Only recently a way has been found of reintroducing into the recordings the life-giving resonance.

That suggests what's wrong with humanism.

It is a triumph of misguided thinking, in that it omits the life-giving depth and resonance which only the dimension of the cosmic can give it.

No wonder the "perfect" logic of humanism does not save it from being "completely dead."

* * *

G. B. Shaw often brings down the tragic to the trivial; Kafka generally raises the trivial to the tragic.

* * *

During the recent war editors of large newspapers displayed a vulture-like discrimination in their choice of horror stories.

According to R. A. Davies, the author of "Odyssey Through Hell," they would cable to their European reporters, "Our readers are tired of horror stories. Cable only if death rolls are unusually large or deaths unusually gruesome."

Stories about Jews, however, even when the deaths were numerous and gruesome were rejected.

The reporter would receive word saying, "Jews atrocities not acceptable news material."

Why then was the *Nation* so surprised recently that the New York *Times* rated the verdict against Rudolf Hoess, who had been convicted of four million killings, as deserving "no more than a stick of type on page eleven."?

* * *

There is as much snobbishness and caste pride in a prison as in a palace, in a cemetery as in a church or synagogue, under communism as under capitalism.

* * *

The traditional heaven is not only an

astronomical fiction but also a psychological absurdity.

It assumes that bliss is a destination instead of an expedition.

* * *

When the philosophers call God "the Absolute" they misname Him.

The Absolute is without a sense of humor.

Of God, however, it is said, "He that sitteth in heaven laugheth."

* * *

When the legal pundits obstruct the enactment of laws designed to prevent the incitement to mass hatred and pogroms, they confirm the truth of the following by Oscar Wilde:

"There is only one thing worse than injustice and that is justice without her sword in her hand."

* * *

Without the salt of self-criticism our best efforts are bound to spoil.

* * *

We prevent a pond from becoming stagnant not by throwing pebbles to ruffle its surface, but by facilitating the outflow of its water.

The way to prevent society from becoming stagnant is not by carping criticisms but by creating the institutions and measures which keep its life on the move.

* * *

The essence of wisdom is to become aware of one's limitations, with a view to accepting them, and of one's potentialities, with a view to making the fullest use of them.

* * *

The most revolutionary step in the reconstruction of our tradition was taken by our great Jewish historians, Marcus Jost, Heinrich Graetz, Isaac Weiss and Simon Dubnow.

If they had not secularized the story of the Jewish past by subjecting it to the laws of historical cause and effect, the Jewish people might have ceased to be a reality and would have evaporated into a myth.

* * *

A poet's or philosopher's estimate of life is as much more reliable than a scientist's as a guest's judgment of a feast is more reliable than the cook's.

M. M. K.

Correspondence

Credit Where It Is Due

Sirs:

The projected University of Judaism, sponsored by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, is now on the eve of realization. As you suggest in your editorial (Vol. XII, No. 15) this is a revolutionary step, which may transform the American Jewish community. Fortunately the opposition by the escapists and monopolists, which the editors once feared is nowhere in evidence. The very reverse is true. The idea has met with universal approval.

Nowhere, however, in the entire literature and discussion has mention been made of the fact that the idea was first promulgated by Rabbi David Polish, at present a contributing editor of *The Reconstructionist*. In December, 1940, Rabbi Polish, in an article in the *National Jewish Monthly*, indicated the need for a University for Jewish Studies. In his article he included a plan for its establishment.

One may differ with details of his plan, for instance how and by whom it should be brought into being. Dr. Kaplan's blueprint, published by the United Synagogue, is indeed far more comprehensive. In essence, nevertheless, both programs are similar.

It is true that note was taken by *The Reconstructionist* some weeks after Rabbi Polish made the initial suggestion. At that time the editors thought "the proposal of a University of Jewish Studies may be premature." (Vol. VI, No. 17).

Now that the University has passed the discussion stage, I think it important for the record, that we recall the original exponent of the idea. To give credit where credit is due is an old Jewish maxim—*ha-omer davar b'shem omero. . . .*

In conclusion, is there any significance in the fact that a Reformist Rabbi made the original suggestion, the founder of Reconstructionism developed it, and the leader of Conservatism sponsored its creation?

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